

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-11 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 INR-07

LAB-04 NSAE-00 SIL-01 PA-01 PRS-01 USIA-06 PM-04

NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 /077 W
----- 052221

R 271710Z JAN 76

FM AEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5379

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USMISSION EC BRUSSLES

USMISSION GENEVA

DIA WASHDC

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB IT

SUBJ: GERMAN LABOR CHIEF IN ITALY

1. SUMMARY. IN CONJUNCTION WITH HIS VISIT TO ITALY, DGB PRESIDENT VETTER IS QUOTED IN THE ITALIAN PRESS AS MAKING SERIOUS STATEMENTS OF APPROBATION REGARDING ITALIAN COMMUNISM. EVIDENTLY SOME OF THESE QUOTES HAVE BEEN PICKED UP IN THE GERMAN PRESS. THE GERMAN LABOR COUNSELOR STATES THAT THE STATEMENTS ATTRIBUTED TO VETTER ARE HIGHLY DISTORTED. END SUMMARY.

2. HEINZ OSKAR VETTER, PRESIDENT OF THE GERMAN TRADE UNION FEDERATION (DGB), RECENTLY VISITED ITALY IN THE COMPANY OF IG METALL PRESIDENT LODERER AND DGB NATIONAL SECRETARY SCHWAB. AT A PRESS CONFERENCE HELD AT THE CONCLUSION OF HIS VISIT, VETTER WAS SUBMITTED TO SOME CLOSE QUESTIONING ABOUT ITALIAN COMMUNISTS. THE TWO PAPERS WHICH REPORTED AT SOME LENGTH ON THE PRESS CONFERENCE -- ROME'S LEADING DAILY, THE LEFT WING IL LESSAGGERO, AND THE NEW LEFT-WING TABLOID LA REPUBBLICA

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-- PRESENT CONTRASTING REPORTS ON WHAT VETTER HAD TO SAY.

3. IN LA REPUBBLICA, BARBARA SPINELLI, A LEFT WING SOCIALIST WITH KNOWN ANTI-GERMAN BIASES, QUOTES VETTER AS SAYING, INTER ALIA: "WE HAVE BECOME CONVINED OF THE SINCERITY AND SERIOUSNESS WITH WHICH THE COMMUNIST WING OF THE UNIFIED FEDERATION (I.E., THE FEDERATION CGIL-CISL-UIL-CCU) STRUGGLES TO ACHIEVE COMPLETE INDEPENDENCE FROM THE ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY." SPINELLI GOES ON TO ASSERT THAT VETTER, ALONG WITH LODERER AND SCHWAB, REPRESENT THE LEFT-WING OF THE GERMAN SPD UNDER WILLY BRANDT, AS OPPOSED TO THE DGB CONSERVATIVE WING LED BY CHEMICAL WORKERS PRESIDENT HAUENSCHILD.

4. SERGIO TURONE, WRITING IN IL MESSAGGERO, ON THE OTHER HAND, COMPLAINS THAT VETTER BACKED AWAY FROM ANSWERING ANY QUESTIONS REGARDING THE ITALIAN COMMUNISTS. TURONE, HIMSELF A LEFT WING SOCIALIST AND AEDENT CHAMPION OF ITALIAN LABOR UNITY, QUOTES VETTER AS SAYING THERE HAS BEEN NO CHANGE IN DGB POLICY ON THESE MATTERS. "CERTAINLY, THERE IS A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A COMMUNISM DOMINATED BY TIES WITH MOSCOW

AND ONE WHICH HAS A NATIONAL PHYSIognomy," HE QUOTES VETTER AS SAYING,

"AND IF ONE CAN TALK OF SYMPATHIZING, WE CERTAINLY HAVE MUCH MORE SYMPATHY FOR THIS SECOND TYPE."

5. TURONE'S ARTICLE RECOUNTS AN INTERESTING INTERCHANGE. A GERMAN REPORTER ASKED ALDO BONACCINI, INTERNATIONAL SECRETARY OF THE COMMUNIST

LABOR FEDERATION CGIL, WHETHER THE CLASSIST POSITIONS OF THE ITALIAN LABOR MOVEMENT WERE RECONCILABLE WITH THE SOCIAL COOPERATION WHICH CHARACTERIZES THE GERMAN MOVEMENT. BONACCINI, IN SEEKING TO SHOW THAT APPARENT DISTINCTIONS ARE OFTEN MERELY NOMINAL, RECOUNTED THE ANECDOTE OF A BISHOP WHO LOVED TO EAT MEAT ALSO ON FRIDAYS. WHEN IT WAS POINTED OUT TO HIM ONE FRIDAY THAT HE WAS COMMITTING A SIN, HE LOOK AT HIS STEAK AND SAID, "I HEREBY BAPTIZE YOU A FISH" AND CONTINUED EATING. WHEN LATER VETTER BACKED AWAY FROM TURONE'S QUESTION AS TO WHETHER DEMOCRACY IN ITALY WOULD BE IMPERILED IF COMMUNISTS WERE NEEDED IN THE GOVERNMENT TO SOLVE THE ECONOMIC PROBLEMS

TURONE WANTED TO KNOW OF BONACCINI WHETHER VETTER'S ANSWER WAS MEAT OR FISH. BUT BONACCINI REPLIED SOBERLY: "VETTER IS QUITE RIGHT IN
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HIS RESPONSE WHICH MAINTAINS THE AUTONOMY OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT."

6. COMMENT. WE HAVE SPOKEN WITH GERMAN LABOR COUNSELOR DORR WHO ASSURES US THAT THE REPUBBLICA QUOTES ARE GROSS DISTORTIONS OF WHAT VETTER ACTUALLY SAID, AND THAT THE MESSAGGERO ACCOUNT IS THE MUCH MORE

ACCURATE ONE. DORR STATES THAT, UNFORTUNATELY, FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE ZEITUNG HAS APPRENTLY PICKED UP THE REPUBBLICA

ACCOUNT AND HE EXPECTS THAT A CONTROVERSY MAY WELL ENSUE IN GERMANY. DORR ADDS THAT THE REPUBBLICA STORY WAS DISCUSSED WITH VETTER PRIOR TO HIS RETURN TO GERMANY, THAT VETTER DENIED MAKING THE REMARKS ATTRIBUTED TO HIM, AND FOUND AMUSING THE DESCRIPTION OF HIMSELF AS LEADER OF THE DGB'S LEFT WING.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, LABOR UNION OFFICIALS, LABOR UNIONS, VISITS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 27 JAN 1976
Decapton Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decapton Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: morefirh
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976ROME01365
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760031-0377
From: ROME
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760118/aaaaaozv.tel
Line Count: 121
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: morefirh
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 22 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <22 APR 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <17 MAY 2004 by morefirh>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: GERMAN LABOR CHIEF IN ITALY
TAGS: ELAB, OTRA, IT, GERMAN TRADE UNION FEDERATION, (VETTER, HEINZ OSKAR)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006